



UNIVERSITY OF CUMBRIA

**ATTENDANCE AND ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT
PROCEDURE**

2026/27

Academic Registry

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The University of Cumbria is committed to providing an inclusive, supportive learning environment where all learners can thrive. Attendance and active academic engagement are key to academic success, personal development, and progression. This procedure sets out how the University monitors attendance and academic engagement, how learners can report absences, the approach taken to lateness, and the process for appealing any stage of the attendance procedure.

2. Scope

- 2.1. The attendance and academic engagement procedure applies to learners enrolled on programmes awarded and delivered by the University of Cumbria, regardless of mode or location of study.
- 2.2. In this procedure, unless specified otherwise, 'learners' means:
- Undergraduate and postgraduate taught learners – full-time, part-time, and distance learning.
 - Postgraduate Research Students (PGRs) are not subject to standard attendance monitoring thresholds (see section 7.1).
 - Learners on placement or work-based learning.
 - International learners on a student visa.
 - Learners receiving financial support – including, Lifelong learning entitlement (LLE), Student Loans Company (SLC) funded and other learners needing attendance/engagement confirmation.
 - Distance learners - studying flexibly or at a distance, attendance and academic engagement are monitored through evidence-based indicators appropriate to the mode and structure of study, recognising that engagement may be asynchronous and non-linear.
 - Learners studying via approved partnerships – partners must operate attendance and engagement monitoring that meets or exceeds this policy.
- 2.3. International College learners are monitored by Malvern International under a separate [Student Attendance Policy and Procedures](#).
- 2.4. Academic engagement is monitored through a range of indicators to establish if a learner is actively engaging in their studies. Evidence may include activity on the University's virtual learning environment (Blackboard), submission of work, data from the [Student Engagement Dashboard](#), participation in Student Progress Reviews (SPRs), and information arising disciplinary processes. Engagement may also be demonstrated through other activities, particularly where a course includes independent study, placements, research activity, or dissertation-based study. These indicators are also used collectively to determine a learner's last date of academic engagement for formal

processes, including deregistration and application of the four-week rule. The University therefore distinguishes between attendance and academic engagement and applies monitoring mechanisms appropriate to the student's mode and stage of study.

3. Process for Monitoring Attendance and Academic Engagement

- 3.1. The University monitors student attendance to ensure engagement with learning activities.
- 3.2. Learners must maintain at least 90% attendance.
- 3.3. Attendance monitoring will commence two weeks after the learner's programme start date for all other learners, allowing time for them to join their cohort.
- 3.4. Attendance thresholds are measured using a rolling two-week monitoring period, beginning two weeks after the programme start date. A learner's attendance percentage is calculated against all scheduled timetabled sessions within each consecutive two-week period.
- 3.5. Where a learner's attendance falls below the required threshold during any two-week period, this will trigger the relevant stage of the Attendance and Academic Engagement Procedure. Monitoring continues on a rolling basis, with each subsequent two-week period informing whether a learner progresses, escalates, or de-escalates within the process.
- 3.6. While formal stage triggers operate on this rolling two-week basis, attendance may also be reviewed cumulatively across a module or term to identify persistent patterns of intermittent or inconsistent engagement.
- 3.7. Where a learner's attendance falls below the 90% threshold for two consecutive weeks, Stage 1 (Early Concern) is initiated. At this stage, an Attendance Concern email is issued, acting as a welfare check and the student is directed to the relevant support services and encouraged to speak with their personal tutor.
- 3.8. If a learner has zero attendance for four consecutive weeks, the learner will receive official communications that the [4-week rule](#) process will be initiated as stated in Appendix 8 of the Academic Regulations under point 2.
- 3.9. If attendance remains above zero but below the required 90% threshold for a further two consecutive weeks after Stage 1 was initiated, Stage 2 (Escalated Concern) is triggered, requiring a [Student](#)

Progress Review meeting, in which the learner's situation is discussed and reviewed which may include an agreed and recorded Action Plan.

3.10. Failure to attend a Student Progress Review meeting may be referred to the separate Disciplinary Procedure, where non-compliance with the Student Progress Review procedure can be considered. The Disciplinary process has scope to address minor misconduct.

3.11. If the learner's attendance continues below 90% for the next two-week period, Stage 3 (Serious Concern) is initiated, and an Attendance Warning is issued explaining that continued low attendance is potentially a breach of the Student Code of Conduct and the disciplinary process will be invoked.

3.12. Attendance stages and actions where a learner's attendance falls below the required 90% threshold:

Stage	Stage Name	Threshold/Duration	Action
1	Early Concern	Required threshold after two consecutive weeks	Attendance Concern (email) Signposting to personal tutor and Student Support Services.
2	Escalated Concern	Required threshold in the two consecutive weeks following Stage 1.	Student Progress Review (SPR) Supportive meeting with personal tutor, development of action plan with agreed actions to increase attendance.
3	Serious Concern	Required threshold in the two consecutive weeks following Stage 2.	Attendance Warning (email) If attendance does not immediately improve, the learner will receive an email to confirm there has been a breach of the Student Code of Conduct and the disciplinary process will be initiated.

3.13. All stages will be initiated by Programme Administration and communicated to the Programme Teams. At all stages, actions and decisions must be recorded. Where the learner does not respond to communications or fails to attend scheduled meetings, the process will continue based on attendance data, and escalation may occur as needed.

3.14. At any stage, a learner may submit evidence of mitigating circumstances

to the shared Programme Administration mailbox, which the Programme Administration Manager will review to determine whether this is sufficient to prevent progression to further stages and reset the attendance levels.

- 3.15. If attendance improves above the relevant threshold for two consecutive weeks at any stage, Programme Administration will notify the Programme Lead who may determine that the student returns to standard monitoring.
- 3.16. If Programme Administration identifies a recurring pattern in which a learner's attendance improves and then declines repeatedly, and this occurs on three separate occasions, the University may escalate the matter to Stage 2 (Escalated Concern), or, if the student has previously had a Stage 2 notification (Escalated Concern), to Stage 3 (Serious Concern).
- 3.17. In setting attendance and academic engagement expectations, the University complies with the Equality Act 2010 by applying monitoring in a fair, inclusive and proportionate way. Attendance thresholds operate as support-led indicators rather than fixed rules, prompting early engagement with students where concerns arise. Decisions are made using professional discretion and contextual judgement, taking account of individual circumstances and any agreed reasonable adjustments. This approach helps minimise the risk of indirect discrimination while supporting student wellbeing, success, and academic standards.
- 3.18. 'Attendance' throughout this procedure refers to the monitoring of participation in timetabled learning activities, where such activities form part of the course structure, as detailed in [D5 of University of Cumbria's Academic Regulations](#). Attendance is used as one indicator of academic engagement. However, the University recognises that academic engagement may also be demonstrated through a wider range of activities, particularly where programmes include flexible delivery, asynchronous learning, independent study, placements, research activity or dissertation-based study.
- 3.19. The University therefore distinguishes clearly between attendance monitoring and academic engagement monitoring and applies monitoring mechanisms that are appropriate to the learner's mode and stage of study. Academic engagement monitoring is used to identify and record a learner's last date of engagement in the student record system, confirming when they last participated in active study. This date is essential for determining non-engagement-related processes, including the application of the 4-week rule, which operates alongside issues relating solely to attendance at timetabled sessions.

4. Apprentices:

- 4.1. Apprentices must maintain 100% attendance (including authorised absences).
- 4.2. Attendance monitoring will commence immediately for apprentices.
- 4.3. Attendance below 100% for apprentices after the first two weeks is reported immediately to the employer for their action. Attendance stages and appeals process/do not apply to apprentices.
- 4.4. For apprentices where their apprenticeship is provided by the employer, standard attendance percentage thresholds may not be the primary indicator of participation, and engagement will be determined through evidence of academic engagement.

5. Distance and Blended Learners

- 5.1. For blended and distance learners, attendance normally refers to participation in any scheduled synchronous learning activities that form part of the programme, where these are required. This may include live online lectures, tutorials, seminars, cohort meetings, or other timetabled academic activities delivered remotely.
- 5.2. Where a programme does not include compulsory synchronous sessions, standard attendance percentage thresholds may not be the primary indicator of participation, and engagement will be determined through evidence of academic engagement.

6. Placements

- 6.1. During periods where a student is undertaking an approved placement in the UK or internationally as part of their course, attendance and academic engagement are monitored through continued participation in the placement and engagement with required placement-related academic activity, including scheduled academic check-ins, reviews, and completion of associated assessments. The University retains responsibility for monitoring academic engagement throughout the placement period and will take appropriate action where engagement concerns are identified.
- 6.2. If a learner fails to attend their placement without authorised absence, the placement provider will notify the University. This may result in the student being removed from the placement and, potentially, withdrawn from their programme of study.

7. Postgraduate Research

- 7.1. Postgraduate Research students undertake independent, non-timetabled study and therefore fall outside standard attendance monitoring thresholds. Students are expected to attend scheduled supervisory meetings, and supervisors and students must maintain an appropriate record of these meetings as detailed in the [Good Practice Guide: Monitoring and Assessing PhDs](#).
- 7.2. Any concerns relating to a student's academic engagement or attendance at supervisory meetings will be discussed and documented as part of the Annual Review process as detailed in [Postgraduate Research Code of Practice](#) in principle 5 between the student and supervisor.
- 7.3. Concerns arising outside of the Annual Review process must be escalated by the supervisor and reported to Head of the Graduate School as detailed in the [Good Practice Guide: Monitoring and Assessing PhDs](#) and Programme Administration in a timely manner. Actions may include communication about concerns regarding attendance or engagement, and, if there is no improvement, may ultimately lead to deregistration.

8. Student Visa Holders

- 8.1. Learners sponsored under a student route visa must maintain a minimum attendance level of 90%. Where a learner's attendance is recorded as zero for four consecutive weeks, the 4-week rule will be applied. Where attendance falls below the required 90% threshold, the learner will be managed in accordance with stages 1–3 of the attendance procedure.
- 8.2. Learners sponsored under a student route visa who are undertaking a work placement that forms an integral and assessed part of their course are not subject to standard attendance requirements for the duration of the placement. Academic engagement during a placement is monitored through required contact points, which may include scheduled supervisory meetings, placement reviews, submission of assessed work or reflective reports, and confirmation of continued participation in the approved placement arrangement. The University retains responsibility for monitoring academic engagement throughout the placement period and maintains appropriate records to evidence ongoing academic engagement. Where a student ceases to engage with required placement-related academic activity, or where a placement ends prematurely without an approved alternative, the University will take action in accordance with its sponsor duties, including withdrawing sponsorship where appropriate and reporting to UK Visas and Immigration.
- 8.3. Full details of any placement are submitted to the Compliance Manager no later than the first day of the placement, to ensure that the University can meet its reporting obligations to the Home Office within 10 working

days. The required information includes the placement location, the name of the host organisation (including ward or department where applicable), the full placement address, the placement start date, and the anticipated end date.

- 8.4. During periods where a sponsored learner is undertaking a dissertation or thesis and no longer has timetabled taught elements, standard attendance monitoring requirements do not apply. Academic engagement is monitored through evidence of active participation in required dissertation-related activity, which may include supervisory meetings, submission of draft work or progress updates, completion of formal reviews, and engagement with required academic processes. The University maintains appropriate records of engagement during this period and will take timely action where a lack of academic engagement is identified. Where a student ceases to engage with their dissertation without approved circumstances and fails to re-engage following intervention, sponsorship will be withdrawn in accordance with UKVI sponsor duties.
- 8.5. Learners holding a student route visa who are undertaking a full-time Student Union Sabbatical Officer role are exempt from standard attendance monitoring requirements. Academic engagement for sabbatical officers is evidenced through confirmation of continued appointment and active participation in their elected role for the approved term of office. The University will maintain records confirming the learner's ongoing engagement through periodic verification with the Students' Union. Where a sabbatical officer resigns, ceases their role early, or otherwise disengages, the University will take appropriate action in line with sponsor reporting duties and UKVI requirements.
- 8.6. Postgraduate research students (PGR) sponsored under a student route visa are monitored in accordance with the University's Attendance and Academic Engagement Policy, recognising that such programmes do not operate on the basis of timetabled classroom attendance. Academic engagement for PGR students is evidenced through active and ongoing participation in required research-related activities appropriate to the programme, including but not limited to supervisory meetings, research activity, formal progression or review milestones, research training and development requirements, submission of interim written work, fieldwork or laboratory activity where applicable, and participation in required examinations or assessments (including transfer/upgrade and viva voce). Engagement may take place in-person or remotely, in line with the approved mode of study. The University maintains documented records of these engagement points and reviews them on an ongoing basis to ensure that sponsored students are actively and consistently following their course of study. Where a lack of academic engagement is identified, timely intervention is undertaken and recorded. If a sponsored PGR student ceases to engage with their studies and fails to re-engage within

a reasonable period, and no exceptional circumstances apply, the University will withdraw sponsorship and make the required report to UK Visas and Immigration in accordance with sponsor reporting duties.

Learners in breach of the conditions:

- 8.7. The University will report to UKVI a learner as being in breach of the conditions of their student route visa when the pattern of absence has breached the university's Academic Regulations and Student Code of Conduct, and where they have not given reasonable notice, or the University has reasonably not given permission.
- 8.8. This has two consequences:
- Deregistration of the learner from the programme of study.
 - Student visa sponsorship of the student will be withdrawn.
- 8.9. If the learner's permission to stay in the UK under their Student visa has expired or been cancelled by UKVI, the learner will have to apply for new permission to remain before they can return to programme.

9. Absences

- 9.1. The University of Cumbria expects learners to attend all scheduled learning activities and to engage fully with their programme of study. Where absence is unavoidable, learners must follow the procedures outlined below.
- 9.2. Notification of absence:
- Learners are responsible for notifying the University of any absence as early as possible, before the missed session, using the [designated reporting process](#).
 - Notification should include the reason for absence and, where required, supporting evidence (e.g., medical certificate, official appointment letter).
- 9.3. Authorised vs Unauthorised Absence:
- Absences may be classified as authorised or unauthorised:
 - Authorised absence: Exceptional circumstances supported by evidence (e.g., illness requiring a GP/hospital visit, recurring or ongoing conditions (including mental health), minor ailments, bereavement, visa or police registration appointments, or authorised leave by an employer).
 - Unauthorised absence: Absences without valid reason or evidence (e.g., oversleeping or personal errands).
 - Absences can be approved by the Personal Tutor.

- 9.4. For certain programmes regulated by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs), such as those overseen by the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), a specified number of learning and/or practice hours is required for professional registration. In these cases, the distinction between authorised and unauthorised absence is not applied in the calculation of required hours.
- 9.5. Learners requiring maternity, paternity leave or support for fostering or adopting a child should liaise with their Personal Tutor to ensure appropriate support is put in place, as detailed in the [Student Pregnancy & Family Leave Policy](#). This leave will be recorded as authorised absence, and learners will not be subject to routine attendance monitoring during this period.
- 9.6. Absence for apprentices:
- Absences for apprentices will be reported to the employer as appropriate within the timescales as set out in any contractual agreements.
- 9.7. Absence on placement:
- Learners who are unable to attend their scheduled placement must inform the university of their absence by 9am on the first day of absence, wherever possible.
 - Learners on Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes must also notify their school where they are on placement before the start of the school day, providing the reason for their absence.
 - Learners on health programmes must additionally contact their placement provider directly to report their absence and give all relevant details. They must then record the absence through their PARE system/placement timesheet and inform their Personal Tutor.
 - Learners on non-education or health programmes, must also notify their employer.
- 9.8. Student visa holders:
- Absence is recorded as either notified or non-notified. Notified absence is one in which the student informed the University either using the online reporting tool on the Student Hub or by contacting their Personal Tutor via email.
 - A notified absence, for a religious event for example, can be authorised following discussion in advance with the Personal Tutor who signs off the absence, in writing, as appropriate and agrees any work required to ensure the learner does not fall behind due to the absence.
- 9.9. Prolonged absence:

- Learners anticipating an absence of more than seven consecutive calendar days or repeated absences must contact their Personal Tutor or Programme Leader to discuss support options.
- Where extended absence is likely to affect their ability to keep up with the course and/or assessments, learners may be advised to consider a break in their studies. Learners should seek guidance on the impact on funding and visa status where applicable.

9.10. Learners who miss sessions are expected to catch up on missed learning and maintain engagement with their studies. Failure to notify the University of absence may result in escalation (see table at paragraph 3.13) which could include formal warnings or withdrawal.

10. Lateness and Punctuality

10.1. The University expects all students to attend scheduled teaching sessions on time as part of maintaining professional standards and supporting positive learning behaviours. Timely arrival helps a productive learning environment and supports group cohesion and sessions involving teamwork, discussion or collaborative tasks. Late comers should use Blackboard materials and/or borrow notes from a classmate to access content they have missed.

10.2. A learner is considered late when they arrive after the scheduled start time of the session and within the first third of the session.

10.3. A learner who leaves a scheduled session before its conclusion may be recorded as absent; however, minor early departures (for example, leaving a few minutes prior to the end of the session) should be considered at the discretion of the session lead and may not warrant an absence classification.

10.4. Apprentices who arrive 10 minutes late for a session will be marked as late.

10.5. More than two occasions of late arrivals will be aggregated i.e. two instances of lateness counted as one full absence.

10.6. Where lateness contributes to a student's attendance percentage falling below the required thresholds, appropriate stages as detailed earlier in the policy document will be triggered.

10.7. The University recognises that learners may occasionally face difficulties that impact punctuality. Learners are encouraged to communicate proactively with staff where circumstances affect punctuality so that appropriate support can be offered.

10.8. The University recognises that distance and blended learners may

experience occasional connectivity or IT-related issues that are beyond their control. Where such issues impact punctuality or result in late attendance, these factors will be taken into account when considering any follow-up action. Learners are expected to notify the relevant programme team as soon as practicable and to engage with available support where persistent technical difficulties arise. Learners are responsible for ensuring they are ready in advance for the start of an online session.

11. Appeals Process

- 11.1 If a learner wishes to appeal the outcome of the [4-week rule](#) process, they must do so by following the procedure set out in Appendix 8 of the Academic Regulations, as referenced in section 3.
- 11.2 If a learner wishes to appeal the outcome of the [Student Disciplinary Procedure](#), they must follow the disciplinary appeals process outlined in Section F.

12. Document Control Information

UNIVERSITY OF CUMBRIA POLICY DOCUMENT CONTROL SCHEDULE POLICY SCHEDULE	
Policy title	Attendance and Academic Engagement Procedure
Policy owner	Academic Registry
Related University Policy Documents	Attendance and Engagement Procedure Academic Regulations 4-Week Rule Procedure Student Attendance Policy and Procedure International College Student Code of Conduct Student Disciplinary Procedure
Policy lead contact	Programme Administration Manager
Approving body	Academic Board
Date of approval	June 2026
Date of implementation	September 2026
Version no.	0.1

Review interval	Annual monitoring with triennial review			
Revisions following recent review				
REVIEW SCHEDULE				
Review	Due date	Reviewed by	Approved by	Completion date